



## SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION TEACHING AS AN INTERVENTION FOR ADDRESSING POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*The paper examines political and electoral violence in Nigeria using Social Studies education as an intervention to address the social problems which is affecting the political stability, peaceful coexistence and Nigeria quest for accelerated national development. The study indicated that, political and electoral violence could be curbed through the appropriate teaching of right political values as well as fostering understanding, promoting civic engagement, and advocating for positive attitudinal change toward political and electoral matters. Among other things indicated in the write-up is what Social Studies as a discipline and its educators can engage in to help address political and electoral violence among the diverse elements made up of Nigerian society. It is hopeful that with the appropriate teaching of Social Studies using adequate instructional strategies, political and electoral violence and its negative effects will become the issue of past. This will help the country to lay a good foundation for socio-political, economic and educational prosperity that will translate to improved condition of life for the people of Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Political and electoral violence, Political stability, Peaceful coexistence, National development, Political values

### **Introduction**

Political violence is one of the problems facing democratic process in Nigeria which in turn affects the country aspiration for accelerated development. Nigeria's democratic journey has been marred by recurring episodes of political and electoral violence, which have undermined the country's stability and development. This paper examines the causes, effects, and consequences of political and electoral violence in Nigeria as well as the roles of Social Studies in addressing this political ill in the country.

According to Nweke (2006,) the emergence of political violence in Nigeria is rooted in the nature of party formation, which was ethno-regionally based. Ever since the attainment of independence in Nigeria, the country has witnessed unprecedented political violence which is a serious impediment to national development and unity. Ani and Nwanaju (2011) observed that at independence, political conflicts took over the political scene of nation building in Nigeria and its manifestation effect gave rise to factors that led to the Nigerian civil war between 1967 and 1970. However with the coming back of civilian government in May, 1999, it was expected with high hopes that the new democratic order would address the problem of political violence in the country thereby facilitating economic and social order and prosperity. It is regrettable to note that since the return of civil rule in 1999, political violence continue to dominate the body politics which is detrimental to Nigeria quest for accelerated development. However the motive behind this write-up is to examine how

Social Studies education could be used to address the incidence of political and electoral violence in Nigeria to pave way for sustainable development geared towards improving the condition of life of people now and in the future.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

The two concepts have been defined by many scholars in deferent ways. Political violence is defined as the use of physical force or intimidation employed to attain political objectives, including power seizure, maintenance, or disruption of the political process. Dowley (2018) described political violence as the intentional use of force or coercion to achieve political goals, encompassing terrorism, insurgency, and warfare. In another definition, Chenoweth (2020) saw political violence as the physical, psychological, or structural coercion utilized to achieve political ends or maintain power dynamics. Political violence is a form of violence relations and crisis of interest, goals and ambitions between individuals, groups, and political structures in the process of attaining power and keeping it (Johnmary, 2012). Therefore, political violence takes place in the process of power struggle aimed at certain very players in the political system. This is obviously detrimental to socio-political progress in any social system and hence need amelioration through functional education system.

Electoral violence on the other hand is defined as violence occurring within the electoral context, targeting candidates, voters, officials, or property and



disrupting the electoral process. Elklit (2019) on his own defines electoral violence as coercion, intimidation, or force employed to influence electoral outcomes or disrupt the democratic process.

### **An Overview of Political and Electoral Violence in Nigeria**

Political violence has been identified as common experience of many developing countries like Nigeria (Ogar, J. N., Ogar, T. E., & Bassey, S. A. (2018)). It was a significant achievement on record that Nigeria gained her political autonomy with minimum violence in October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, but is embarrassing that ever since independence, political violence has reached a dangerous dimension. It is very importance to note that political violence attached with election and electoral processes in Nigeria traceable to the 1959 Federal elections designed by British to facilitate the transition from Colonial rule to independence (Ogundiya & Baba 2005). This situation worsened in the elections held immediately after Independence in 1960s. In the defund Western Region, political violence popularly known to as Operation Weti e were recorded in 1964 to 1965 following Federal and Regional elections as well as rift between Awolowo and Akintola (Aver, Nnorom & Targba, 2013.). There were also political violence in parts of Northern Region especially between the supporters of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and supporters of other parties, mainly the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and Action Group (AG) (Aver et al, 2013).

Another political violence that surfaced after independence was the Military coup of January 1966, where a group of young Nigerian military officers seized power and killed the then Prime Minister Tafawa Belawa, Amadu Bello and Ladoke Akintola the Premiers of Northern and Western regions respectively. This military coup- d'état led to political violence that resulted to the Nigerian civil war between 1966 and 1970 where many lives and properties were lost. Following a protracted military rule that lasted for thirteen years, the Murtala/Obasanjo regime carried out a transistion programme and returned the country to civil rule in 1979.

However, the 1979 election witnessed very low cases of violence. According to Nwolise (2007), the election was characterized by violence at three stages - pre-election, during the election and post-election violence. In almost all the states, the results were contested or disputed. The major contending issue was that of 2/3 of 19 States which was resolved in favour of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, NPN presidential candidate by the Supreme Court. The 1983 elections were not free of violence. The election was rigged in

favour of the then ruling party, the National Party of Nigeria, (NPN). The outcome of the election led to violent demonstrations in some parts of the country. For instance, the landslide victory of the National Party of Nigeria NPN in Oyo and Ondo States considered to be stronghold of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) witnessed massive post-election violence. Several persons lost their lives and large scale destruction of properties was recorded (Alemika 2011).

The violent political activities in the country contributed to the overthrow of Shagari's regime on 31st December, 1983. In what could have ushered in the third republic by General Babangida designed in 1993, was however aborted by the June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election which created chaotic situation in the country. The cancellation of the election led to massive ethnic and religious crisis in the country. Ibrahim Babangida stepped down in 27 August, 1993 which led to the formation of an interim government headed by Chief Earnest Shonekan. The interim government was terminated following "the palace coup" led by General Sani Abacha. Abacha's regime was beset with oppressive policies and assassination of people tagged political enemies to his administration. Notable among these was the murder of Mrs Kudirat Abiola, wife of the acclaimed winner of the June 1993, presidential poll annulled by Babangida (Alfa & Otaida 2012.). Later Abacha died mysteriously in the process of trying to transform himself into a civilian President. General Abdulsalam Abubakar who replaced Abacha supervised 1999 elections that ushered in the Fourth Republic on May 29th 1999.

However, there were high expectations that the new democracy would help to reduce the menace of political violence in the country. It is worrisome that since the return of civil rule, Nigeria has witnessed unprecedented level of political violence which militates against economic and social transformation of the country. One this note, there is need to look into some causes of political and electoral violence in Nigeria as indicated below.

### **Causes of Political and Electoral Violence in Nigeria**

There are many causes of political and electoral violence on Nigeria. One of the causes is ethnic and religious Tensions. Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious landscape has been a significant factor in electoral violence (Agbaje, 2019). Ethnic and religious affiliations often influence voting patterns, leading to tensions and conflicts between different groups (Olaniyi, 2020). Each ethnic and religious group wishes to promote its member to gain political power by all means so that nation's resources can be

for their benefit.

Another cause of political and electoral violence is competition for resources and power. According to Ibrahim (2019) the struggle for control of Nigeria's vast resources and political power has fueled electoral violence coupled with the destruction of life and properties. Nwolise (2019) remarked that Politicians often employ violent means to secure electoral victories and maintain power.

Another cause of political and electoral violence in Nigeria as noted by Ogundiya (2018) is inadequate electoral management by the electoral umpire for economic gain or desire to retain their job especially in favour of the ruling government. It is on this note that Afolabi (2020) remarked that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has faced criticism for its handling of elections, leading to disputes and violence. There are many post-election cases in law court showing dissatisfaction of electoral processes and results. Also there were cases where candidate declared by electoral umpire were removed by court ruling. This shows poor handling of electoral process in Nigeria.

### **Effects of Political and Electoral Violence in Nigeria**

The effects of political and electoral violence has on the overall development of the country cannot be overemphasize. Some of these effects in the first instance are Human Rights abuses. As noted by Amnesty International (2019), electoral violence has resulted in widespread human rights abuses, including killings, injuries, and displacement. The 2019 elections witnessed numerous human rights violations, including restriction of movement and freedom of assembly (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Human right abuse is a dangerous trend to peaceful coexistence in Nigeria ant it is pure violation of the constitutional provision of Nigeria constitution.

Secondly, political and electoral violence results into the displacement and migration of some people from their places of abode in affected area. The 2019 elections resulted in over 10,000 internally displaced persons as recorded by (Nwangwu, 2020). This incidence has economic implication to individual and the nation at large. For instance government would have to spend huge sum of money for those who were displaced which should have been spent on developmental programmes to improve the quality of life of the people of this nation.

The third effect of political and electoral violence is economic instability. According to World Bank (2019), electoral violence has undermined Nigeria's economic stability, deterring investment and hindering economic growth. The 2019 elections resulted in a significant economic losses, estimated at

over N1 trillion as noted by (Oyinlola, 2021). This is a great economic lost to a country aspiring for social and economic recovery, it mark country not readiness for attracting foreign investors as no investor will want to invest in non-peaceful area where such investment will result in futility.

Another serious implication of political violence for national development is that it leads to electing those leaders that are not credible which is detrimental to economic and social progress of the country. Election of unqualified politician into political offices in Nigeria is one of the causes of poor leadership that cannot help to translate Nigeria quest for accelerated development into reality (Okoafor, 2013). The developmental challenges facing contemporary Nigeria could be attributed to poor leadership. Political violence has greatly affected educational activities and consequently school calendar is avoidably extended. This adversely extended the duration a student would spend in school which attracting more expenditure on parents, more worrisome is exposing students to social vices like drug addiction, alcohol, armed robbery, prostitution among other vices (Aver et al, 2013). Based on the above mentioned factors, we can deduce that political violence is a serious threat to national development in Nigeria.

### **Roles of Social Studies Education in Curbing Political and Electoral Violence in Nigeria**

Social Studies is capable in addressing electoral violence in Nigeria by fostering understanding, promoting civic engagement, and advocating for positive change. As a matter of fact, the overall objectives of Social Studies teaching were clearly stated to imbibe individual with appropriate skills, attitudes and values to curb political and electoral violence in Nigeria. To this end, with due focus of on the Objectives of Social Studies, here are some ways in which Social Studies can help to curb political and electoral violence with appropriate instructional strategies:

Social Studies educators should integrate courses on the historical context of electoral violence, the democratic process, and civic responsibilities into the Social Studies curriculum. This will help students to develop a deeper understanding of the issues and problems surrounding elections thereby enable them to make a well informed decision on political and electoral matters.

Similarly, Social Studies should engage in public awareness/and campaigns, this involves the use of Social Studies lesson to create awareness about the consequences of electoral violence in in Nigeria. Such effort can include the integration of political education concepts in its curriculum. Also ,



workshops, and conferences should be organized to keep people with a well-informed behavior to address electoral crisis in the country. This will go a long way to develop more political and electoral responsible behaviour among people in Nigerian democratic struggle.

Similarly, Social Studies education should strive to imbibe in learners the appreciation of the importance of ethical behaviour, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence. To this end it should inject in learners the values that discourage violence and promote constructive political participation such as tolerance, comradeship, togetherness, patriotism, discipline and peace. These will help to develop politically responsible behavior among the youth of our time.

Furthermore, Social Studies Education should gear its efforts towards equipping students with critical thinking skills to analyze information in normal perspective and make a well informed decisions on political issues. This can contribute to a more dynamic and responsible citizenry on political and electoral matter. The objectives of Social Studies recognizes the development of critical thinking skills in learners that will enable them make a well informed decision on issues and problems of survival in their day to day interaction with varied environments.

Social Studies education can also help to organize community forums or town hall meetings to discuss dangers in electoral violence and other related matters. During this initiative Social Studies would engage community members, leaders, and experts to collectively discuss matter related to right societal values to political issues that aid peaceful coexistence. Also, Social Studies education can as well Partner with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that focus on political concepts such as democracy, human rights, and conflict resolution to address possible issues that can cause political violence with the aims of reducing in the country thereby promoting harmonious living.

Moreover, Social Studies education should encourage students to undertake research projects on electoral violence, its root causes, and potential solutions. This not only builds research skills in students but also contributes valuable insights to the wide understanding of the political and electoral issue. The recommendations in such work will add to measure to proffer solution to electoral violence in the country.

### **Conclusion**

There is clear evidence that, political and electoral violence is a dangerous trend in Nigeria democratic movement. It has caused much of destruction of lives

and properties which has cost Nigeria a lot of money to reposition the damages created by electoral and political violence which ought to be used for developmental project for the well-being of the people of this country. However, such needs to be jettisoned by Nigerian citizens whom are to be seen as a social problem that needs to be addressed vigorously in Nigeria with a view to lay a good foundation for the realization of the national aims and objectives of the country. It is hopeful that the above recommendation if put into practice will help to curb political and electoral violence in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

In other to address political and electoral violence in Nigeria through effective teaching of Social Studies as an intervention, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Social Studies should vigorously focus on political and electoral education that instill in individual right political values such as love for the nation (patriotism), tolerance, unity, comradeship, selfless service, diligence etc as essential condition for the promotion of healthy nation.
2. It should develop periodic community forums or town hall meetings organized by Social Studies educators to discuss electoral violence. Engage community members, leaders, and experts to share insights and perspectives on right societal values to political issues that aid peaceful coexistence.
3. It should engage in equipping students with critical thinking skills to analyze information critically, question narratives, and make well informed decisions. This can contribute to a more discerning and responsible citizenry on political and electoral matter.
4. It should inspire the youth to become active participants in advocating for peaceful elections and contribute to building a more inclusive and democratic society. The youth should be inspired to be the agents of change of behavior towards political and electoral matters.
5. It should advocate for policy changes that address the systemic issues contributing to electoral violence. This may involve engaging with policymakers, contributing to policy discussions, and supporting initiatives for electoral reform relieve of political and electoral violence.
6. It should encourage students to undertake research projects on electoral violence, its root





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